Connecticut Wing Safety Alert!

20 March 2003

To All,

This continues to be a "hot" safety item regarding static electricity at the fuel pump. I apologize for the lengthy article, but it provides excellent information and guidelines regarding this potential hazard. I also offer three examples of static electricity incidents while refueling at military installations. Take a minute when you pump gas to read the warnings posted at each refueling pump; it might save your life! Thanks!

18 Dec 02 - White Sands
A customer was fueling his truck. He was sitting in the cab of his truck while fueling when he got out and reached for the nozzle there was just enough static to create a spark igniting the fumes and gas around nozzle creating a flash fire, which burned the customer and caught the nozzle and hose on fire. The customer's legs caught fire and another customer used his jacket to put out the fire.

5 Dec 02 - Ft Bragg
A customer got out of the van and put the nozzle in the gas tank, but forgot to push down the button to fill up while they waited in the van. Another occupant of the van got out of the van to push down the button. Fire came out and the front and side of her hair and left eye brow were singed. The pumps all went on reversed and wouldn't authorize.

29 Nov 02 - Lackland AFB
A customer was filling several gas containers loaded in the bed of his truck. Since the gas containers were not on the ground the static electricity ignited the gasoline vapors. The customer took the flaming gas container and threw it off the truck at the same time gas fell on his pant legs and his clothing ignited.

Refuel safely by stopping static electricity build-up

DALLAS -- The Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES), which operates service stations worldwide, wants to remind motorists of the importance of avoiding potential problems with static electricity at the gas pump. In many parts of the country, static electricity build-up is most likely to occur during the Fall and winter months, when the air is cool or cold and dry - the typical climate conditions for static electricity buildup. Static electricity can build up when a motorist exits or re-enters the vehicle during fueling. Upon returning to the vehicle fill pipe during or at the end of refueling, the motorist may experience a static discharge at the fill point, which may cause a flash fire or small sustained fire with gasoline refueling vapors. Static electricity-related fires have occurred at AAFES' and other retail gasoline outlets. According to the American Petroleum Institute (API) and the Petroleum Equipment Institute (PEI), such incidents are on the increase. To date, over 150 incidents have been reported to PEI that have resulted in numerous injuries, property damage and one fatality. The most effective means by which a motorist can avoid static electricity problems at the gas pump is to stay outside the vehicle while refueling. It may be very tempting to get back in the car during extremely cold whether, but the average fill-up only takes around two minutes and staying outside the vehicle will greatly minimize the likelihood of any build-up of static electricity that could be discharged at the nozzle. In the rare event a motorist does experience a fire while refueling, it's important to remember to leave the nozzle in the fill pipe of your vehicle and back away from it. Immediately notify the station attendant to shut off all dispensing devices and pumps with emergency controls. If the facility is unattended, then use the emergency shutdown button to shut off the pump anduse the emergency intercom to summon help. Leaving the pump nozzle in the vehicle will prevent any fire from becoming more dangerous. Motorists who feel the need to get back into their vehicle during refueling should discharge any static buildup upon exiting the car before going back to the pump nozzle. This can be done safely by touching a metal part of the vehicle, such as the door, or some other metal surface, with a bare hand. Consumers can minimize these and other potential fueling hazards by following safe refueling procedures all year long. For more information on avoiding potential problems with static electricity build-up at the pump, and other safe motor fuel refueling, storage and handling guidelines see

API's web site at www.api.org/consumer & PEI's web site at www.pei.org/static

Safe Refueling and Fuel Handling Guidelines for Consumers American Petroleum Institute and the Petroleum Equipment Institute have provided the following consumer refueling and fuel safety guidelines that will help keep you and your family safe when refueling your vehicle or filling up gasoline storage containers:

*Turn off your vehicle engine while refueling. Put your vehicle in park and/or set the emergency brake. Disable or turn off any auxiliary sources of ignition such as a camper or trailer heater, cooking units, or pilot lights.

* Do not smoke, light matches or lighters while refueling at the pump or when using gasoline anywhere else.

* Use only the refueling latch provided on the gasoline dispenser nozzle, - never jam the refueling latch on the nozzle open.

* Do not re-enter your vehicle during refueling.

*In the unlikely event a static-caused fire occurs when refueling, leave the nozzle in the fill pipe and back away from the vehicle. Notify the station attendant immediately.

* Do not over-fill or top-off your vehicle tank, which can cause gasoline spillage.

* Avoid prolonged breathing of gasoline vapors. Use gasoline only in open areas that get plenty of fresh air. Keep your face away from the nozzle or container opening.

* When dispensing gasoline into a container, use only an approved portable container and place it on the ground when refueling to avoid a possible static electricity ignition of fuel vapors. Containers should never be filled while inside a vehicle or its trunk, the bed of a pickup truck or the floor of a trailer.

* Only store gasoline in approved containers as required by federal or state authorities. Never store gasoline in glass or any other unapproved containers.

* When filling a portable container, manually control the nozzle valve throughout the filling process. Fill a portable container slowly to decrease the chance of static electricity buildup and minimize spilling or splattering.

* Fill container no more than 95 percent full to allow for expansion. * Place cap tightly on the container after filling - do not use containers that do not seal properly.

* If gasoline spills on the container, make sure that it has evaporated before you place the container in your vehicle. Report spills to the attendant.

* When transporting gasoline in a portable container make sure it is secured against tipping and sliding, and never leave it in direct sunlight or in the trunk of a car.

* Never siphon gasoline by mouth or put gasoline in your mouth for any reason. Gasoline can be harmful or fatal if swallowed. If someone swallows gasoline, do not induce vomiting. Contact a doctor immediately.
* Keep gasoline away from your eyes and skin; it may cause irritation. Remove gasoline-soaked clothing immediately.

* Use gasoline as a motor fuel only. Never use gasoline to wash your hands or as a cleaning solvent.

* And finally, a reminder to not use cell phones or smoking while refueling your vehicle.

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